

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal
CONDUCTED BY
CHARLES DICKENS
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

No. 443. NEW SERIES. SATURDAY, MAY 26, 1877. PRICE TWOPENCE.

DOUBLEDAY'S CHILDREN.

BY DUTTON COOK,

AUTHOR OF "YOUNG MR. NIGHTINGALE," "HOBSON'S CHOICE," &c. &c.

BOOK III. THE STATEMENT OF NICHOLAS DOUBLEDAY.

CHAPTER IV. OF DORIS.

On the following day I saw Basil again. He had news to tell me; he had received a letter from Doris. She should have written to me, of course, as the eldest of the family. But Doris had a sort of talent for doing otherwise than she ought to have done.

She told Basil that she wrote to him to allay the anxiety she was sure he would feel on her account. There was no word of my anxiety, although, towards the close of her letter, she condescended to remember me so far as to send me her love. She begged that she might be spared all reproaches and expostulations; she had been driven by circumstances to the step she had taken. There had been no help for it; she could not marry Mr. Leveridge. The idea of such a thing had become, day by day, more and more odious to her. She could no longer remain under Miss Leveridge's roof. She had fled, therefore, with M. Paul Riel, whom she loved, and who loved her. She was content to entrust herself and her happiness to his keeping. She had become his wife. She signed herself, "Doris Riel."

The letter was written from Dover. A postscript supplied further information. She had been married at a church in Soho. She did not know the name of it; but it was an ugly stone church, with a clock almost at the top of the steeple. She hoped to be in London again very shortly; she

would write again soon. She was very happy. Paul was kindness itself.

Then came a second postscript. She implored Basil not to judge her harshly; nor to withhold from her his love and his sympathy. She had need of these, now, more than ever. And he was to try and like her husband, and to make friends with him. At all events, if Basil was disposed to think severely of her conduct, he was to hold his judgment in suspense until they met. What she had done she would do again, supposing it were given her to decide anew, or she were again placed in the position from which she had escaped. But she relied upon Basil's finding, in his brotherly affection for her, excuse for conduct which she readily admitted might seem to him rash, almost to madness. At the same time, he was not to suppose, for one moment, that she regretted what she had done; she did not—she could not regret it. She did not write to him because she was penitent; she was not penitent in the least.

She added that the weather was lovely at Dover; as if we cared to know that!

I need hardly say that my disgust at finding I had a Frenchman for a brother-in-law was very great. I was extremely angry with Doris, and heartily ashamed of her. But I had to reconsider my intention of thrashing Paul Riel. That he richly deserved a thrashing I was convinced. Still, I felt that, as a general rule, people usually refrained from punishing in that way the husbands of their sisters.

"Do you believe her story, Basil?" I enquired.

"Believe it? Of course I believe it. Doris would not lie."

"I'm not so sure. Doris is capable of almost anything, it seems to me. She may wish to screen that wretched Frenchman from our just displeasure."

"I do wish she'd make haste back to London. I long to see her. Poor Doris!"

"That's just like you, Basil. You're inclined now to be sentimental about Doris and her French husband."

"She appeals to my affection and sympathy. How can I resist that?"

"And you'd receive her with open arms, and treat her kindly, and tenderly, for all the world as though she were a most exemplary character, and had never done anything that was in the slightest degree incorrect?"

"It is not for me to judge her, or to punish her, whatever she may have done."

"Think how badly she's behaved to Mr. Leveridge."

"I'm very sorry for Mr. Leveridge. He has been very badly treated, no doubt. Still, he has himself to blame in some measure."

"I don't see that."

"At any rate, Doris is my sister. I can't forget that."

"She's my sister too; but that's no reason why I shouldn't express my opinion of what I must call her disgraceful behaviour. I think we ought to show her the cold shoulder for some time to come. As to the future, we should be guided entirely by her own conduct. If she is properly penitent and submissive, I should, perhaps, be disposed to take a lenient view of her case. But I don't think I can persuade myself to show any kind of civility to her husband. The wretched French interloper! How dare he sneak into our family in this way? I really lose patience when I think of it."

"You may be sure that Doris will resent any want of attention shown to her husband."

"Then she may resent it. But, so far as I am concerned, she'll find it's no use her giving herself airs. A pretty thing indeed! If she needs must get married, why could not she do it properly and regularly, with the members of her family present, and with a nice comfortable breakfast for us all to sit down to after the ceremony? There's a way of doing these things; and a woman can't be too particular as to what's due to social custom and appearances. At whatever inconveniences to myself, I would have made a point of getting a holiday from old Baker, and attending at church to give her away. But, instead of

that, she sneaks away at daybreak in a cab with her Frenchman, and gets married on the sly in this unknown church in Soho. It seems to me scarcely decent. Who was present, I wonder, to see them married? And I suppose afterwards they went to have breakfast at one of those dirty French coffee-houses in the neighbourhood—I can't conceive anything more degrading and disgusting—with crowds of unshaven foreigners in soiled shirts, and a lot of disreputable billiard-markers and domino-players, puffing tobacco smoke over them! What could Doris have been thinking about? Where could she have acquired such low tastes? The fact is, she was spoiled by her long stay at Bath. She lost the benefit of the good example set to her at home; she got out of the way of wholesome discipline and control. And this is the consequence! She's disgraced the Doubleday family; that's what she's done, disgraced the family."

As I was determined to satisfy myself on the subject of her marriage, I sought out the church in Soho; I found it without much difficulty, and forthwith I inspected the registry of marriages. She had spoken the truth. A marriage had been duly solemnised between Doris Doubleday, spinster, and Paul Riel, bachelor. One of the witnesses signed himself, "Alcide Gontran Bouchardon," a Frenchman no doubt; some wretched refugee probably. The other witness was "Mary Ann Cobb," whose signature was a miserable scrawl. She was, as I learnt, one of the pew-openers of the church. To what depths had Doris fallen!

There was no mistake about it, then. Doris was really the wife of a Frenchman. And if any children were to be born of her marriage they would be half French. My nieces and nephews half French! To think of my being the uncle of mongrels of that sort!

It was odd that I could not induce Basil to share my indignation on that head. "Why mongrels?" he asked. It was enough for him that they would be Doris's children. And he suggested that it was rather premature to discuss such a subject. There he was right, perhaps.

He had seen Mr. Leveridge again. He was much depressed, but quite calm. He had spoken of certain things Doris had left behind her in Powis-place—dresses, clothes, her desk, and dressing-case, &c. He was anxious that these should be sent to her as soon as could be. She might be

in want of them; and they were strictly her own. Mr. Leveridge owned that he could not write to her himself, he had not the heart. But he bade Basil write to her very kindly and tenderly, and to assure her that, notwithstanding all that had happened, he remained still her faithful old friend; that he was sorry that any act of his had pained her, or constrained her to the course she had so hurriedly adopted. That if he could ever help her she was to depend upon him still; and she was to think gently and generously of him, as he in his turn should always think of her. The poor old dotard! He meant well, no doubt; but he was really too absurd.

Miss Leveridge called Basil aside. She was white with passion, and she shook all over. She told him in very plain terms, that if Doris's things were not all sent for, or sent away very shortly, they should be sold "to defray expenses," or bundled into the street to take their chance. She declined to keep any article whatever that belonged to Doris, or that could remind her in the slightest degree of so infamous a creature. Miss Leveridge was very much excited, and had, perhaps, lost her head a little. But I quite understood her hatred of Doris.

I was rather anxious to know how far Catalina had been affected by the disgrace that had fallen upon our family.

"You have heard of Doris's marriage?" I said.

"Yes; I have heard of it. And I do so hope that she may be happy."

"You do not blame her?"

"Why should I blame her? She burst her bonds—it was a misfortune that she was ever bound by them. I am sure that she did it for the best. It was not quite right, perhaps—and yet there is justification in the result. There is always a victim, a sufferer in such cases, and poor Mr. Leveridge richly merits our sincerest commiseration. But one's truer sympathy goes with Doris and her husband. I say again, I do so hope she may be happy."

"But this M. Riel—you know him, of course?"

"Yes, I know him."

"He's a Frenchman."

"He's a Frenchman," she repeated, laughing. "But, you know, he can't help that. We can't all be English. I am only half English, remember. And yet, I am not really sorry about it. Indeed, I am rather proud of my Spanish father. But you have heard me say so before."

She seemed rather inclined, I thought, to be flippant on this subject.

"And you think," I said, "that Doris can possibly be happy with this M. Riel?"

"Well," she said more gravely, and after a moment's hesitation, "may we not hope so? There may be certain trials and troubles before them, as before others. But trials and troubles are the conditions attendant upon life. Why should not Doris and her husband be happy together? I will hope they may be so, at any rate; yes, and I will pray so too. And surely this is better than her marriage with Mr. Leveridge. That was dreadful to think of."

I did not agree with her; but I did not care to question her opinion. I was struck by what she said in favour, as I gathered, of a marriage of affection. If I were married to Catalina, I thought to myself, that would be a union of pure affection. Certainly no commercial considerations urged me to the project.

I had never seen Catalina look more beautiful than she looked just then.

"Catalina," I said, "one marriage is often a sort of harbinger of another; at least I think I've heard as much. I should like you to understand that my sentiments in regard to you are just what they always have been."

She looked at me suspiciously.

"Now, Nick," she began, in a warning way. I interrupted her.

"I told you that I should give you three chances. I've given you two—and you did not avail yourself of them. All the same I mean to be as good as my word."

"Please don't," she cried.

"I won't enter fully into the subject, because I made you understand all about it on a former occasion. But I'll proceed to business at once. Now listen, Catalina; and don't make any mistake. What I have to say is this: Will you marry me?—and understand, this is for the third and last time of asking. Will you marry me, Catalina?"

"No, Nick, I will not."

And she here put herself quite into a passion.

"I told you so before, and I tell you so again. I won't marry you—I won't marry you—I won't marry you! I answer you three times, as you asked me three times. And if you were to ask me the same question three hundred million times, I should still give you the same answer. Now, never let me hear another word upon the subject. Whatever you do, don't dare to

“speak to me again in this way. If you do—I shall hate and despise you. Do I speak plainly enough? Do you understand me? I shall hate and despise you.”

So saying, she walked quickly out of the room, banging the door after her.

I was surprised, I admit, and considerably annoyed. I had not been prepared for so unfavourable a reception. And I did not know that Catalina had such poor command over her temper. I was much disappointed in her.

I decided, of course, that I would not renew my suit. Indeed, I perceived that my love for her had undergone grave abatement. I was of opinion, moreover, that she had shown herself to be unworthy of my love. I felt that she was not fitted to be my wife.

I began to ask myself which of the three Miss Bakers it was—Emmy, or Alice, or Eliza—that I preferred.

Alice was the nicest-looking—but I was disposed to think that Eliza admired me more than the others did. That fact I counted to be very much in Eliza's favour.

EARLY WORKERS.

AT PAPER-BAGS.

SOME forty Early Workers (boys), in an Industrial Home, assembled under one roof, are able to make together in a week as many as sixty thousand paper-bags of various sorts and sizes. Sixty thousand paper-bags a week are two hundred and forty thousand paper-bags multiplied by four; and in a given month in the year, good measure, the same constituting such a month as July or August, and containing the extra days given to it by the calendar, this accomplishment of two hundred and forty thousand can have pressed into it, by extra hours and extra forcing, a great many extra grosses of paper-bags more. On one notified occasion, indeed, the monthly make rose to the considerably higher total of three hundred and sixty-three thousand eight hundred and sixty. It sounds enormous.

One of the odd things about the business is that such an article as the paper-bag should have the distinction of pressure and slackness—of, in other words, a “season.” The idea naturally is that if there be an insignificant piece of merchandise, utterly below the fluctuation of a “run” or any variety of caprice, that piece of merchandise is the airy and perishable paper-bag. The notion,

however, would have been obtained without fit reflection, and would enjoy the fit reward of being fallacious. It is in the full current of hot summer time, when fruit is plentiful, that one of the seasons of the paper-bag comes. Windsor sends up its russet pears then, and Kent its cherries, and Devonshire its apples, and Norfolk its biffins; and there are “enormous gooseberries” (making sieve-loads as well as paragraphs), and waggonsful of currants, of plums, of damsons, and green-gages; and as every pound, or half-pound, or other retail quantity, of these appetising goods vended requires its paper-bag, orders are sent out in anticipation of this demand to the manufacturers, hurriedly and abundantly. In this same hot summer time, also, many light vegetables crowd the market, which it is quite the custom nowadays to have sent home to the consumer in the thin brown-paper-bag; tomatoes, Brussels sprouts, French beans, mushrooms, and so forth. Then, in the more hurried still, because shorter, current of a London Christmas, the paper-bag enjoys its other profitable season. Oranges are in brisk demand then; almonds, raisins, Brazil nuts, Barcelonas, Turkish figs, Greek currants, French confectionery, Chinese teas, Indian berries, American grains; and after all these foreign cargoes have been emptied loose upon the salesmen's counters, they have to be weighed out and packeted, and before this is completed they have used up many a hundred-thousand paper-bags. Indeed, it is hard to say, now, what trader there is, who has not some use, in some one or other of his departments, for this convenient wrapper. Neatness recommends it for one thing; quickness for another (since no folding is required and no tying); careful storage, cleanliness in carrying, trifling cost. Altogether, the greater cheapness of paper, it may be said, and the better organisation and utilisation of labour in cutting this paper up and pasting it into shape, have caused such a development of the paper-bag trade as, twenty years ago, would not have been credited. It is no wonder, therefore, that our forty Early Workers, as one set of little people devoted to the manufacture, are kept at full and active employment, as long as each day's work-hours last.

The production of a paper-bag as a piece of absolute work is, as might be expected, light, interesting, and easy. A quire of paper is folded over into

half its size, not evenly, but slantwise, so that each half-sheet when cut shall have its cut edge all askew, in the ratio of the right short side being nearly an inch shorter than the left; this one wholesale cutting is done by a single sweep of an ordinary carving-knife that might have come off any dinner-table; and at once the quire of paper is in twice its number of pieces, and the material for exactly as many paper-bags is cleanly and efficiently there. But, why let the cut be slanting? Why would not a straight cut do? This shall be told. A straight cut would not do, because, with it, two edges of the paper would have to be turned up to form the bag instead of one, and because with two edges, two pastings would be required instead of one, or one edge must be left hanging loose, thoroughly insecure. Then the cut answers its purpose best when slanting, because, in that case, not only does the wide end fold up over the narrow end without any doubling, but, as the whole partition and shaping are effected by one knife-sweep, good time is gained, and the charge for the bag, when ready, can be proportionately less. Still, all sheets of paper, it must be stated, are not halved, and all bags are not struck out by this one deft slicing. Those requiring a somewhat superior manufacture are cut at a certain level nearly half the paper through, forming the full width of the bag when made; have next a downward or perpendicular cut about an inch in length; and have then the other, and larger, half of the paper slit along at that inch of lower level, leaving the sheet—the same as in the slanting method—shaped for two bags, with the inch of perpendicular cutting fitting the top bag-piece into the lower bag-piece, as a notch fits together two pieces of a puzzle. Since three cuts have been necessary to effect this, though, entailing three folds, it can be seen how three times the number of slanting-cut bags could have been arranged for in the same period, and how important was the adoption of the slanting cut as a means of rendering paper-bags as cheap and popular as they now are. And to this it must be added, that no matter whether the bag has been treated by one method or the other, it is at this stage mainly shaped, with only a further and final cut to it to be given. This is a resolute slice-off—sharp-down, clean—of the right-angle at the lowest right-hand corner. It is this end of the paper that will become, when folded, the

bottom of the bag. Off the angle must go, therefore; otherwise the folding along of side over bottom would make double thickness, just as straight-cut paper would make double thickness at the prime shaping, and with double thickness must come double pasting, or there must be a thickness left unpasted, with the bag absolutely no bag, and its real purpose completely gone. Then as to the cut that performs this de-angle-isation, it is sharpness itself. A stack of bag-pieces is placed on the Early Worker's table; it is piled as high as an Early Worker can make it safely go; a young arm is laid tight on it to keep it in its place; and the knife is sliced down from top to base, with hundreds of small paper-triangles following its descent, flying as snow-flakes might fly in a light winter-storm. Cutting over, thus—and it is certainly done in masterly and wholesale manner—the time for folding the bag-piece has come. Its right-hand side is laid over towards its left, just stopping short of the outer edge of it by about three-quarters of an inch, wherein can be discovered the secret of the notch-shaped paper being a little larger in the left half than in the right. If bag-pieces had both halves perfectly alike, when the two side-edges came to be folded over there would be effected immediately that same double thickness that has been the stumbling-block in the way of bag-making from the very beginning. There must be a clean margin left, consequently, and then, when this margin is folded over on to the upper side, all can be pasted down into bag-form proper, accurately, and efficiently. At this point, enough folding has been done. The form of the bag is indicated, the back of the fold is marked by a crease—done by the Early Worker's thumb—and the bag can now be printed, if the printing-press happens to be empty, and it has been ordered to bear the dealer's name, or the printing can be reserved for another opportunity; and the next operation can be entered upon—that of laying the bags out. To "lay" is to get as many dozens of bags as possible in a sweep; is to get a whole table-length of bag-pieces, say a stretch four or five yards long of them, arranged so that only the margins at the side and bottom are in view and that no more of these margins is there than will be enough, with none to spare, for pasting. By description or anticipation would it not seem that this is a labour, that would take an Early Worker a good long time at it?

That it would afford him wide arena for much small and stiff-fingered shifting and shuffling, such as would make deep inroad into those appointed work-hours that ought to enable him to produce his quota, towards the Home's daily ten thousand fairly? In real working, facts upset this appearance totally. The absolute laying out of this neat line of folded bag-pieces is done in a twinkling. The Early Worker appointed to do it pulls out of his pocket the broken handle of an old tooth-brush, the Early Worker rubs this extraordinary little tool down the pile of de-angle-ised bag-corners, and there is the whole long line, all of it spread out, ready. The curious little tooth-brush has lowered the pile as the boy has stroked; it has pushed it out, telescopically, as fast nearly as can be seen, and there is no more laying to be done. After it, it is easy enough for another Early Worker to bring a paste-pot and a paste-brush and to "lick" the whole of the exposed margins one after the other, or one at the same moment as the other, straight off, down. As much as that can be understood with no need of telling. What is not to be so readily understood is, that the next operation is called bag-making. "Making" might have been concluded to have had a commencement some long time before. Yet open pieces of paper—so reflection will assure—have only remained open pieces of paper up till now, spite of their having had one fold over—nothing could have been held in them; and surely that the paper should hold, or securely confine, or encase, after this cutting and contriving of the exterior edge of it, is the reason why it has ever been touched at all. Let "made" be the expression used now, then, accepting it as violating no strict rule or order. In itself, it is to fold the bottom of the bag up, to fold the right side of the bag over, and the bag is there. Sorting out of topsy-turvydom and what not into evenness and straightness is the next operation; it is succeeded by counting into half-grosses; and the last arrangement of all is to string these bags in these half-gross packets, for the convenience of the dealer, with the care always that the Early Worker drills the hole for the string in the neck of the bag and not at the bottom, and that he drills it to use up as little of the bag as possible, and in the left-hand corner.

Now, the bag that has been thus described is the plain-shaped bag of ordi-

nary use; its material being thick brown paper, thick violet-coloured paper, any coloured paper of any less thickness, down to the thin, light, and crackling "white." If it were very brown and very big, it is the sort into which would be dropped such a sharp-edged article as large-lumped preserving-sugar; if it were less thick and less big, it is the sort that would be brought to the house full of kitchen-soda; if it were paler and more polished, it might hold seed; if it were thin and soft, "white," it might hold in the large size a peck of flour, in a smaller a modish *ruche*, in the smallest of all, a child's cherished pennyworth of "jubes" or "acidulated drops." There is a technical term, of course, for every sort and size. Not to particularise them all, "eight on the sheet" is one, meaning that a sheet of soft white paper is to be cut into eight, when it will produce the bags that shall hold "half-quarters;" "twelve on the sheet" is another, meaning the paper to be cut into twelve, for bags to hold a pound; "eighteen on the sheet," "twenty-four on the sheet," "thirty-two on the sheet," "forty-eight on the sheet," are more, for half-pound bags, quarter-pound, two ounces, and one ounce respectively. "Double double small-hand" is a technical term denoting the size of the paper selected to cut these bags; another trade-name being "double middle-hand," the size for half-peck bags; and another, "double lumber," the size for quarters. But there is a paper-bag implying a much more intricate branch of manufacture for Early Workers than this ordinary kind now done with. This other variety is that smooth-surfaced, pale-tinted, respectably-solid bag, called the tea or square bag; a specimen clever enough to lie quite flat in neat grosses for its master's convenient stowage, and yet able to stand bolt upright on its beautifully diamonded base, if a hand be put into it momentarily to expand it. And it must not be thought that this especial piece of "business" is to be arranged for without especial manoeuvring. Extra Early Workers wanted for its due achievement are folders, creasers, pasters, turners-in—a skilful quartet—and all of these little people have to superadd their cunning manipulation after the bag has left other Early Workers, in the full sense and technically, "made." Yet, let their work be organised, that is, put under the influence of that wonderful division of labour that is magically both a multiplica-

tion of results and a subtraction from time and trouble, and it will be found to go as simply and as rapidly as the rest. There has to be a zinc mould in the first place, the exact size the square bag is to be; this mould being not square at all, but mitre-shaped—oblong, that is to say, for the most of the length of it, and then starting suddenly off to a sharply-defined point; and then the four operations are effected one after the other far more quickly than can be explained. The folder thrusts the mould into the made bag; doing it, it would seem, perversely the wrong way, since, instead of aiming the point at the bag's centre, so that the corners could bend down easily over it, he puts the point into one of the corners themselves; the folder chops his hand at the back of the hooded mould, bending down a cleft between the two points loosely, and making the bag into the form of a mitre really; and then he unhoods the mould, and hands the bag to his near young neighbour, Master Creaser. Creaser runs his thumb all along the mitre-shaping, fixing it effectually; Paster takes the bag to dab a spot of paste on to each of the two mitre-points of it; Turner-in, as final operator, does away with these points altogether by turning them in till the bag is punt-bottomed, of twin-build, and will let itself lie sideways in perfect flatness, for sorting and for counting, and for the other work necessary to be done for it to be hand-trucked away. It is a bewilderment to watch these four operations. It is agreeable; for the conviction comes that the boys can only think it very pleasant labour, since the paste-brush is a favourite implement always, and here are cocked-hats and paper-boats being produced with such legitimacy of action, that the more abundant they are it is all the better, and there is no hand likely to check the most exuberant youthful vigour. But this thought dies away, of course, with sober consideration. Boys—and girls also—have a habit of disliking the occupation set them to do, even if it be the very thing that ten minutes before they would have chosen; and though no symptom of unwillingness or disaffection was discernible in these Early Workers, beginning at those mounted upon the printing-press, and ending at the most distant wooden bench-ful of them, it would be Utopian to suppose they found the gladness of recreation in their task, and the idea must be dismissed. That they work well, though, is an ascer-

tained fact. The young community realised a profit of one hundred and seventy pounds, one shilling, and sevenpence, in the last computed year of which particulars have gone forth, and this is the best proof of it. It has been argued, nevertheless, that it is not desirable for the boys themselves that they should be put to making paper-bags. Women and girls make them in the outside world, where labour is free, and where fair choice can be made; a boy, therefore, is not capacitating himself for the business of his lifetime when he is learning this creasing, and pasting, and folding, that seem to go so easily. And the reason the trade is occupied by women is that (except in the few posts of foremen and superintendents) the earnings are but low for a London artisan. Let women work as hard as they may, fifteen shillings a week is the best price for them; and there is nothing in the labour paper-bags call for to admit of a man doing it better and quicker than a woman, and so bringing larger profits. There is something in the labour of paper-bag-making, though, that calls for reform, and calls for it strenuously. Stout bags represent the largest mass of the trade now; stout bags being either the ordinary shape or the square, and made of cheap coarse paper that is rough if it be of the hard sort, and tough even if it be the smoothly-polished; and the constant creasing of this coarse paper with the thumb brings certain and painful punishment. The thumb, in fact, gets partly worn and torn away; and perhaps the time may come when machinery may be devised for this cruel creasing, and the trade experience a total change. Meanwhile, it cannot be bad, surely, for one of the industries adopted by a male Industrial School to be the making of paper-bags. The scholars in every Home must be taught something; the reason they are caught is that they may be taught; and since the principles of application, of accuracy, neatness, propriety, despatch, belong to all businesses, the Early Workers who have received preparation in one are, to a very great extent, qualified for all the rest. And the thumb-wearing, that would seem to enforce the withdrawal of bag-making from the scheme of children's labour altogether, has not the same time to show its injurious effects upon Industrial scholars, as upon out-of-door women and girls. Industrial scholars have only half their days absorbed by their trades;

schooling of the ordinary sort forms the rest of their occupation (reducing to twenty the forty of these particular Early Workers mentioned at the outset, if the hours they work be fairly counted), and the very fact that bag-creasing does not last the whole of these children's lives is thereby a recommendation to it, and does away with the chance of injury from another side. Besides, that labour should pay, whilst doing no harm, is a matter that is most essential. At this Home visited (it is in Leman Street, Whitechapel) the trade of wood-chopping was started, but it resulted in loss, and had to be abandoned. It is as true, too, of wood-chopping as of paper-bag-making, that it cannot be adhered to when the boys have grown to men. And, in clear fact, there are very few working boys who can begin at once at the precise branch of the occupation they are going to stick to; there are very few working-men who can be working now at the precise branch of the occupation they began at when they were boys. Boys' industries, in short, are just the industries that are fit for boys; let boys do them.

All along, running in and out of this sketch of paper-bag-making, there has been, every here and there, a smear of paste. It has been unavoidable. But now there shall be a look into the paste-pot itself, by way of getting rid of the subject altogether. Let it be approached daintily; for it is a full-sized galvanised-iron pail, and it is not wonderful it should spread spots and stickiness, out of its wet abundance, on to boy, and bench, and bag, and flooring, giving generously and impartially to the very end. A paste-pot that is no cup or pint, but a sturdy pail, and that makes its appearance from the kitchen loaded to the brim, is not likely to guard its treasure rigidly, or be niggardly or stingy. A whole quartern of flour has been taken to make it; three handfuls of ground alum have been taken to help the flour out; and with only half its capacity of water at first, lest it should refuse to fatten, and should keep flimsy, it has had more water and more water, bringing it to the consistency of a pancake, when it has been put upon the fire bodily, itself its own safe saucepan and sole container, and it has been stirred there, and stirred, and stirred continuously, till it has reached a proper and effectual boil. So large as this, so plentiful and thorough, it is no wonder the Early Workers who surround it get so familiar with it, they paste paper together

for their pastime, and manufacture paper ornaments voluntarily, when they might be at other play. The very gas-arms, that stretched themselves out straightly over their littered benches, were pitted and spotted with what the poor children had designed to be very pretty paper decorations; and as this is a pleasant thought in connection with these little Early Workers—seeing, especially, that it was arranged in prospect of a good feast and holiday—it is the last thought that shall be given.

THAT DEAD LETTER.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I. FIRE AND THIEF PROOF.

DINNER-HOUR in the manufacturing town of Middleton-upon-Irk; a hot summer's day; the sun glaring upon huge warehouses of dull red brick, narrow tortuous streets, the gilded minarets of our new town-hall—of which we Middletonians are justly proud. All this I can see from my office-window, with a glimpse of the cocked hat of the bronze memorial to the late Prince Consort, who, in field-marshal's uniform, is holding a review of the Arts and Sciences, on a rearing charger. We are an energetic and thriving community at Middleton, although you might not think it just now, when our streets are all deserted and everybody is engaged in hard feeding. It is no fault of mine that I am not among the everybody. A peremptory engagement retains me at my post. I expect my uncle Henry on business of importance, for which he has chosen the dinner-hour when no one is about.

My obligations to Uncle Henry are so great that his wishes are law to me, even when they involve the sacrifice of my dinner. He has been my guardian and my best friend. By his help I have been enabled to set up on my own account as a solicitor, and, through his influence, I hope eventually to be provided with a respectable practice. He is a thriving merchant of our rising town, and one of the best fellows in the world, enterprising and speculative—perhaps rather too much of the last, but there is a cool confidence about him that generally brings him out right in the end. He has no children of his own, but has another ward, a niece of his wife's, one Kate Brown, between whom and myself, I may tell you, exists an attachment of long standing. When my practice

brings in a sufficient income, Kate and I are to be married.

Altogether, in spite of the dusty, sultry air, the sleepy aspect of things, and the sense of something wanting caused by the neglected call to dinner, I felt as happy as a man could well desire to be; the future seemed bright and cheerful, and there was nothing in the present to cause me the slightest disquietude.

But something in my uncle's step upon the stairs gave me a kind of presentiment of coming misfortune. He came in, and threw himself into a chair; flung his hat upon the floor, and wiped his face with his handkerchief; an unaccustomed air of weariness and chagrin upon his face.

"All well at home?" I asked. "Aunt all right, and Kate?"

He nodded in an abstracted way, and flung a telegram across the table to me. It was from his London correspondent: "Gillies and Co.'s acceptances returned; regular smash; everybody connected with them will come down."

I remarked calmly that it was a very good thing that he was not connected with them.

"But I am, Jem, worse luck," he said; "we were operating in cotton together for a rise, and they have drawn upon me for a big figure."

I felt that this was bad news, and I did not know what to suggest. But presently Uncle Henry brightened up, and went on to say that, although this would no doubt hit him hard, yet that he could weather it, as long as his connection with the bankrupt firm was unknown. The bills that were now maturing, drawn upon him by Gillies and Co., were payable in London. He must raise ten thousand pounds to meet them, and this at once, and with the utmost secrecy. He could do this easily enough on the security of the title-deeds of the property he had in the town and neighbourhood; his banker would advance the amount at once, but he did not want to go to his banker. He would not have it known for the world that he was raising money on his property. Better pay a heavier percentage for the loan, and deal with a money-lender unknown to the world of commerce. Could I find him someone to advance the money at once on these securities?

It was not without embarrassment that I replied that I thought I could put my hand on such a person at once. Some-

time before in my hot and foolish youth I had been led into betting a good deal on races, and losing, one Liverpool meeting, a good deal more than I could pay, was recommended to a money-lender, one Bob Hargreaves of Howbent, who had relieved my pressing necessities at a sufficiently exorbitant rate of interest. Uncle Henry had subsequently very generously paid off all my debts without asking any questions, only exacting from me a promise to abstain from such courses for the future. Bob, it was well known among the initiated, could find money to any amount if he could see his way to a good profit, and I had no doubt that he would jump at the prospect of getting both a high rate of interest and unexceptionable security.

Hargreaves was an eccentric kind of man, nominally a tailor, living the life of a recluse, and nervously apprehensive of having it known that he had any money at all of his own. There was no fear of any want of secrecy on his part. He did not bear the best character in the world, it is true, and it was said that he had acquired his money in a way that would hardly bear investigation. But then you don't ask the character of a man who is going to lend you ten thousand pounds.

I telegraphed to Hargreaves to come over and see me, and next morning, at the appointed hour, I heard a tremendous thumping on the stairs, as if a heavy bedstead or something of the kind were being dragged up. Presently the door was cautiously held ajar, and a wizened face appeared in the opening.

Seeing that I was all alone, Bob—for he it was—whisked dexterously into the room, encumbered as he was by a crutch-handled stick in either hand, and brass-bound wooden clogs on his feet. The amount of timber he carried accounted for the noise upon the stairs.

"Well, I'm here to oblige you, Master Turner, but if it's brass you want, you'll bear in mind I'm a poor man."

"Then you are no good to me," I replied brusquely, "and you'd better go the way you came."

"Aye, but I can get a bit of money sometimes, thou knows. There's many thinks a deal of Bob Hargreaves. But at this minute, I'd take my Bible oath, I'm worth nothing but what I carry on my back."

According to appearance that was very little, for he was dressed in threadbare

clothes of a dirty snuff-brown colour; patched and mended, and that would have advantageously borne still more patching and mending. A greasy black cloth cap was on his head, and the only solid thing about him was a heavy cowskin waistcoat, strangely out of keeping with the sultry weather.

After chaffering awhile, for Bob's impetuosity was only assumed to justify a higher percentage, he consented to find the money—at six per cent. for three months—down upon the nail. While he was away to get the money, I sent for Uncle Henry to come and ratify the bargain. A simple memorandum of deposit of title-deeds was all that was necessary, and this I was not long in preparing; so that the affair was concluded at once, and the parchments handed over to Robert in exchange for ten thousand pounds in Bank of England notes, all soiled and limp, as if they had been a long while in circulation. It gave me a great deal of trouble to make a list of them, for they were of all denominations, and none of the same dates, or of consecutive numbers. I finished the task after awhile, and slipped the list into my portfolio. The notes I placed carefully within my safe, and locked them up.

Bob wrapped up his parchments in an old blue cotton handkerchief and hobbled off, casting many a regretful look behind at my safe, as if it had been a sarcophagus where his heart was enshrined.

That safe, by the way, was a present from Uncle Henry, a capital one by a first-rate maker, and I was really pleased to have something valuable to put in it. Hitherto a simple cupboard would have answered my purpose just as well.

As soon as Bob was gone, Uncle Henry gave me instructions as to the disposal of the money. On no account was it to go through the bank. It must remain in my safe till the next morning, when I was to take it up to London myself, and retire certain acceptances then coming due, and get back the bills. My uncle was much pleased that I had managed the business so promptly, and gave me a cheque for fifty pounds for my services. He was in excellent spirits now. Cotton had seemed a trifle harder at that day's market, and should it rise a little more, he would be able, he told me, to put back the ten thousand pounds he had just borrowed, and clear as much more besides. In that case, he would settle a good part of the money on

Kate, and we might be married as soon as we liked.

I went to bed that night in a happy frame of mind, proud of the confidence placed in me, with vague but pleasant dreams of future happiness, when I and Kate should be man and wife. But just at dawn I awoke in a horrible fright, perspiration breaking forth all over me. I had dreamt that somebody had robbed the office, and in the moment of waking it flashed upon me that I had left the duplicate key of my safe hanging on its accustomed nail over the fireplace in my office. For there I had got into the habit of hanging it, as I had a trick of leaving my keys at home, and found that the duplicate key obviated the inconvenience of not being able to get at my things. In the excitement of the day, I had forgotten about its existence.

I rose at once, although it was barely four o'clock, and walked down to my office at top speed. There everything seemed quiet and tranquil; the windows, grim and dusty-looking, blinked down upon me in a reassuring way. After all, my scare was uncalled for. There was hardly the remotest chance in the world of thieves getting into the place, and if they did, would they be likely to find the duplicate key? There was no use in alarming the neighbourhood by trying to wake up the housekeeper. Everything was firm and tight, the street tranquilly sleeping in the early sunlight. I would wait till six o'clock, and the world was astir again, and then go and secure the duplicate key. I walked about the deserted town, refreshed myself at an early breakfast stall, and then, as the factory-bells were all jangling out, and the streets were filling with operatives hurrying to work, I presented myself at the door of the building that held my office. The housekeeper nodded at me amicably. No catastrophe had happened in the night evidently.

I ran upstairs three steps at a time, darted into my office, and—casting a glance around to assure myself that everything was in statu quo—towards the fireplace for the key. It was hanging in its accustomed place. With a feeling of joyous self-gratulation, that no ill effects had followed my carelessness, I proceeded in a leisurely way to open my safe, to assure myself of the safety of the deposit. Judge of my horror and dismay when I found that the notes were gone—clean gone.

CHAPTER II. THE DEAD LETTER.

To the first stupefaction of despair at the loss of my uncle's money followed an eager desire to be doing something. I must go to the police-office at once; the notes must be stopped; I had taken the numbers—where was the list? In my portfolio; that too I had placed in the safe, that also was gone. Nothing else was touched, the loose silver I kept there was intact.

Here was a blow that almost overpowered me. In addition to the loss of money, loss of reputation would follow. What a pretty sort of tale I should have to tell, of a robbery in which the thieves had left not the slightest trace of their operations, where the objects stolen were notes of which I had retained none of the particulars. Those who knew me best might believe me, but certainly no one else would. Ten thousand pounds abstracted from an unlocked safe, the numbers not known, and no signs whatever of any unauthorised person having entered the premises! Should I believe such a story myself told of any third person?

One opening for hope occurred to me. It was possible that Bob Hargreaves had kept the numbers of the notes he had handed over to me. Howbent was only six miles away; I might be there and back before the hours of business commenced, in ample time, too, to telegraph the numbers to the leading banks. After some difficulty I found a cab, and started to drive there. A miserable, anxious drive it was.

Bob lived in a rough little stone cottage, on a waste, untidy piece of land in the outskirts of the village of Howbent. Early as it was, he was already astir; I could see him through the window, cross-legged on his board, busily at work, stitching away at a cowskin waistcoat; even in the overpowering anxiety of the moment, I could not help a feeling of wonder at his employment, the rest of his apparel stood so much more in need of his labour. The ground was too soft to give warning of my approach, but my shadow falling across the window made him look up suddenly. Catching my eye, a deadly pallor came over his face, the corners of his mouth began to twitch, he jumped off his board and came to the door.

Bob stood in the doorway regarding me with an air of covert mistrust, then his eyes glanced eagerly around as if he doubted whether I were not accompanied. Seeing only the empty cab and its driver, waiting in the road, a hundred

yards off, he recovered his self-possession and enquired my business. I asked him, eagerly, if he had kept the numbers of the notes he had paid me on the previous day. "Why, what's amiss; haven't you?" parried Robert with instinctive caution. Something at this moment prompted me to equal caution. It struck me that Hargreaves would be more ready to give information if he thought that I was already possessed of it. "Oh, I have the numbers," I replied, "but I thought I should like to compare my list with yours." "What, you've gotten a list then," cried Robert, "then what do you want more?" "The notes have been stolen," I said, and then I went on to describe the circumstances of the robbery. Robert listened with a sarcastic, incredulous smile that was very provoking, especially as I felt that his mental attitude towards the story was that which the whole world would speedily assume. "Take my advice," he said, "go home and frame a likelier tale than that. Same time, if your uncle's in with ye, I'm not one to spoil sport. There's one lee to begin with; if they took thy case with the numbers in it, how do you come to know 'em now?" "I took a copy of course," I replied, scarcely noticing the insinuation, or broad assertion rather, contained in Robert's speech; I was too broken-spirited. "But I must compare it with yours; oh, do give me the numbers, Mr. Hargreaves." "Nay, I've gotten no numbers," he replied, sullenly; "what'd be the use of numbers to me? I'd work enow to gather 'em together, bit by bit and one by one, without bothering about numbers. I'm no scholar either for that matter."

With that he slammed the door in my face, and went back to his board, but I saw no sign of the cowskin waistcoat as I passed his window, dejected and crestfallen. Bob was sitting with his needle in his hand, gazing at its point in a kind of sullen reverie. In him was the last gleam of hope I possessed, and I could not give it up without another trial. "I'm sure you could tell me something about them, Mr. Hargreaves," I cried to him through the window, "where you got them from, some of them."

"I tell thee what," said Bob from his board, "I swear my Bible oath I know naught more about thy notes, so go thy ways."

There was nothing to be gained by wasting more time over Robert, and I drove away homewards, still more wretched

than before. By the time we reached Middleton, business had commenced at my uncle's warehouse, and, always early at his work, he was there himself busily occupied. The telling him was the worst part of the business, but he uttered not a word of reproach, and evidently fully believed my account of the matter. Still, as he paced up and down his room with a gloomy ashen face, I saw that the disaster was one that affected him bitterly. "Have you told the police?" he asked sharply, at last. "No," I replied, "I am now on the way; I have only seen Robert Hargreaves since." "Thank heaven you have not. The thing is bad enough, let us make the best of it. Not a word to anybody of the loss. Except Kate, you may trust her, but not another living soul."

My uncle was right, I could see, hard as it was to keep quiet. The tale of such a loss under these suspicious circumstances, at this especial juncture, would be fatal to his credit. As it was, he might be able to tide over his difficulties. He would go to London at once, and try to get the bills held over. And if cotton would only spring a little!

Already Uncle Henry was over the worst of his misfortune, and going about his business alert and composed. But for me, how could I bear the thought of the probable ruin—disgrace even—I should have brought upon my friend and benefactor! I kept up till I had seen him off by the London train. Then I hurried off to Kate to tell of the irretrievable misfortune, and to get a little comfort, where only comfort was possible, from a woman's sympathy.

Kate, when I first told her my news, was overcome with grief and dismay. But she soon recovered presence of mind and courage, and tried to re-establish mine. It was possible to do something in the matter. If we could take no open measures to find out the thieves, we might try secret negotiations. Those who had stolen the notes would likely enough be afraid to cash them at once; perhaps they would be open to an offer, and appreciate the advantages of a good round sum, and safety therewith. Without loss of time, I inserted an advertisement in all the local papers and the London dailies, offering a reward of a thousand pounds for the recovery of the missing notes. But no result followed, whoever was in possession of the treasure made no sign.

Next day came back Uncle Henry from

London, having succeeded in renewing his bills for another fourteen days. It was now the middle of June—on the 3rd of July the delay would expire. There could be no farther credit given, for things were getting worse and worse in town, Gillies and Co.'s failure had caused universal mistrust and want of confidence. But if cotton only sprang an eighth per pound all would be well.

Cotton did not spring, however, but fell a trifle instead. Failures were rife at Middleton as well as in London. The strongest firms were talked about, and Uncle Henry did not escape. Still, he carried on matters bravely; but when the fourteen days had passed, if there should happen no favourable change in the markets, things would be bad with him. I now bitterly regretted that the loss of the notes had not been made public. It would be a pretty story for my uncle's creditors, if he had to call them together—all the more improbable too, as this would be the first that had been heard of it. But it was too late now to say anything about it, would only precipitate matters, indeed, and destroy Uncle Henry's last chance.

Day after day passed away, bringing no improvement in the state of affairs. It was now the last day of the month; on the third of next month, if no help came, uncle would have to stop payment. I was sitting at my desk, the pen idle in my hand, brooding over coming misfortunes, when I heard a letter drop into my box and the quick rap of the postman. It was only a dead letter after all—some letter I had misdirected, no doubt; another piece of carelessness or stupidity to go to my account, swelling by ever so little the great balance against me. Ten thousand pounds! Why, a whole life's slavery would not be an equivalent. I flung the dead letter from me in disgust, and returned to my dismal reverie. There it lay, however, looking at me reproachfully, and I took it up at last to be rid of it. But on tearing open the post-office envelope, I found that the letter within was not in my handwriting, but apparently in that of some illiterate person, and that the address was that of a person I knew nothing about. It was an unopened letter, addressed to "Captain Sam White, Nowland's-row, Middleton." Why had they sent it back to me, who certainly had not written it? The secret was that the envelope was one of mine—its seal embossed with my name and address—and thus it had been sent to

me at once, failing its delivery to the addressee. It was very cool of somebody to make use of my envelope. Still, as the letter had nothing to do with me, I had no right to open it, and I was about to enclose it to the Postmaster-General, asking him to have the letter opened and returned to the original sender, when Kate came in as usual, to see if I had heard anything. "No news again to-day, James?" she asked stoutly; "No news, Kate," and we both sighed; then she looked over my shoulder to see what I was doing.

"Oh, Jem," she said reproachfully, taking the letter from my hands, "you are corresponding with those betting-men again; you are trying to get back uncle's money that way, and you will only make it worse."

Then I remembered that Sam White was a betting-man who had been advertising a good deal lately. I explained to Kate how the thing had happened, and she quietly disposed of my scruples, and satisfied her own curiosity, by seizing the letter, tearing it open, and taking it to the window to read. As she read, her pretty face was puckered up into all kinds of puzzled wrinkles.

"I can make nothing of it," she said, at last, handing me the dead letter.

It was dated the 16th of June, the day after the robbery, but bore no address and no signature.

"Respected friend—Have a litel job lot of calicer prints, ten thowsend yards or so, sewtable for furren market. I'll come over and see the on the furst, and mind ye have the shiners reddy. Owld place, at 'leven i't' morning."

"Jem!" cried Kate, when I had finished reading, no light coming to me in the process, "were there any envelopes in the portfolio that was stolen with the notes?"

"Yes, there certainly were a few, and stamped with my name and address on the seal."

"Then that letter is from the thief and the ten thousand yards of calico are the notes, and he is going to meet somebody on the first, that is to-morrow, to get rid of them."

There was no doubt that Kate was right, and I rose and hugged her on the spot at the joy of her discovery. But, after all, when the first burst of delight was over, how were we the better for this letter? The postmark was Middleton; there was nothing in the letter itself to give any clue to the writer. But if we

could find out the person to whom it was addressed and keep a watch on him? The post-office people had not been able to find him; but, although Sam White might have no definite address, there was no doubt that he was still in existence. His advertisements appeared in the papers constantly, although the crusade of the police against betting-men compelled him to keep out of the way. My former experiences stood me in good stead. I found out a man, an occasional tout, who knew all about him.

"Sam White!" said the man, "why he's going to be wedded this blessed morning." He went on to inform me that White was about marrying a young woman with a lot of money, that he was going to retire from vulgar turf business altogether, and for the future bet only with the aristocracy and at Tattersall's. He was going away to Paris for his wedding-trip, and a few of his friends were going to the station presently to see him off, and give him a parting cheer.

Making myself out to be in the category of Sam White's friends, I got permission to join the party, and soon after noon the bride and bridegroom made their appearance at the station and were chased into a first-class carriage by the waiting crowd of admirers, who howled and cheered in the most rowdy fashion. The captain did not seem over pleased with the attentions of his friends, and the bride was decidedly frightened. She was a very pleasant-looking, pretty young woman, by the way, and in form and features reminded me a good deal of Kate. The opportunity was not to be lost, and jumping upon the carriage step, I thrust the dead letter before him, and telling him that it was a matter of life and death, begged him to say what he knew about the writer. He snatched the letter from my hands, crumpled it up and flung it out of the window, bidding me begone for an impudent rascal. The train moved off amid a salvo of cheers from White's admirers, and I picked up the letter somewhat crestfallen and disconcerted. My friend, the tout, sidled up to me again. "Cut up rather rough with you, did Sam, sir? Set a beggar on horseback, you know. Was it money you wanted off him?"

As a forlorn hope, I showed the man the letter, and asked him if he could make any guess as to the writer, adding that it might be five or ten pounds in his pocket if he could find out.

The man's face brightened, and his whole aspect changed. "I don't know the handwriting myself, but give me three hours and I'll find out all about it."

We made an appointment to meet at my office, and punctual to his time the man appeared. He had found out that Sam White was in the habit of meeting some old fellow, not connected with the turf, on secret business at the Three Pigeons, a public-house in one of the lowest quarters of the town, frequented by thieves and other disagreeable characters. The landlord of the inn, one Grinrod, a retired prizefighter, was a fierce and dangerous fellow, and my friendly tout confessed that a misunderstanding about a disputed bet had made him afraid to venture near the place, and he could gather no further information.

The whole day passed away, and nothing more could be done. Kate looked despairingly at me as I told her what had passed. Captain White had gone out of our ken, and out of English jurisdiction altogether; his correspondent was still a mysterious nothing. The clue that had been so marvellously revealed to us, all come to naught. It was enough to make us despair.

CHAPTER III. THE THREE PIGEONS.

THERE was a dinner-party at my uncle's that night—a very grand one. I never saw Uncle Henry more gay or, to all appearance, in better spirits, and yet three days at the outside would see him a ruined man. Among the guests was Major Smith, the chief constable of the town, a bachelor and bon vivant, who was still rather a ladies' man, and not averse to making himself agreeable to Kate. He took her down to dinner, and I kept a watchful eye upon them. A great *épergne* of flowers was between us, but in the lulls and pauses in the general clatter I could hear what they were saying. He was very fond of talking about the great people he knew, and had been indulging in a long flourish about his dear old friend and comrade, Lord —, when Kate brought him down to the common level by the question, "Pray, Major Smith, do you know a Captain Sam White?"

"White!" cried the major, rather nettled at being cut short, "White! of what regiment?"

"Oh, I don't know that, but he lately lived at Nowland's-row."

The major's eyes at once assumed the keen twinkle of the chief of police.

"Have you been plunging into the betting-ring, Miss Brown? Sam White is a dangerous fellow. He has the character, too, of being a secret 'fence.'"

That was all I could hear, for the tide of conversation rose oncemore, and drowned all individual voices.

I did not enjoy my dinner that evening. I felt that we were on the edge of a precipice. It seemed, indeed, likely enough that Major Smith might soon have the task of hauling us off to prison, on a charge of fraudulent concealment of property. What would become of my aunt—most good-natured and helpless of women—and of Kate? The thought was unendurable.

After the guests were gone, Kate and I had a long and serious consultation together. If the next day passed over our heads without bringing something to light, farewell to hope altogether. It was hardly likely indeed that the unknown criminal would keep the appointment he had made, as he had received no reply to his letter. Still, there was the chance that he would.

Would it be possible to get somebody to represent Sam White, and keep the appointment on his behalf? That was out of the question. White was too well known. Then, although we assumed that the Three Pigeons was the "old place" mentioned in the dead letter, yet we were just as likely to be wrong altogether.

Then Kate's face lighted up, and I saw that she had an idea. "You say that the bride of Captain White was a good deal like me. Well, why should I not make believe to be Mrs. Sam White, and go to keep the appointment on his behalf?" I had a great many objections to urge to such a plan, but one by one Kate overruled them. But I persuaded her to make this addition to her scheme, that I should accompany her in the guise of her husband's clerk, or secretary. Finally, we made an appointment to meet at ten o'clock the following morning, and go to the Three Pigeons.

As we pushed open the swing doors of the Three Pigeons, a strong waft of mingled odours—beer and spirits, flavoured with tobacco, and a slight suspicion of wet sawdust—drove against us; a babel of voices, too, surged out, jocose, maudlin, quarrelsome. Kate shrank back and got behind me; for a moment she was not prepared for such an ordeal as this. A crowd of people, chiefly women, whose characters it would be a compliment to call doubtful, were clustered about a

slippy, pewter-covered counter, wrangling, laughing, snarling, swearing. The most alarming thing was that, at the sight of us, the noise suddenly ceased, and all eyes were directed towards us. The landlord, a huge, brutal-looking man, was baling out supplies of liquor, rigorously exacting the price before delivery, helped by two slatternly-looking women. He glared at us with hot, bloodshot eyes, and seeing that we hesitated at approaching the drinking-counter, fiercely demanded our business. Kate marched up to him with well-simulated boldness. "I am Mrs. Captain White," she whispered.

At once the man's countenance changed and assumed a more friendly aspect, and he led the way to an upstairs room.

"But what do you want?" he said to me, laying his hand on my breast in a threatening way as I was about to follow Kate. "You've naught to do with the captain?"

Kate at once explained that I was the captain's new secretary or agent. Her husband was obliged to keep out of the way, owing to police persecution; but he had an important appointment here, and had sent her and his new secretary to transact the business. In confirmation of this, she handed him the dead letter.

Grinrod spelt it over with a cautious but comprehending face.

"Aye, it's all right, no doubt," he said. "I charge a sovereign for the room, you know." Kate bade me pay this at once; and, as soon as the money had passed, Grinrod remembered that a telegram had just come for the captain, which, perhaps, bore upon the matter in hand. He went to the bar and brought back the telegram. Kate opened it and read it, and handed it over to me with a gesture of despair. It was from "A friend, Howbent, to Captain White, Three Pigeons," laconically, "As thee do not answer, I shall na come."

Now it seemed that all our trouble and pains had been lost. The unknown would not come forth and be revealed. Our chance was gone. The landlord looked at us enquiringly. No doubt he had read the telegram, and knew that it was a put-off.

"Oh, he's not coming, then. Well, why don't you wire him to come over? you can have this room till he comes, only, as it is wanted a deal, I shall charge you another pound for the use of it."

The suggestion was a good one, if we had known to whom to send the message; but, in the latter case, we need not have

been going through this disagreeable, dangerous experiment at the Three Pigeons.

"I don't think," I said, at last, "that my employer would approve of my sending for this man; it looks like being over-anxious about the bargain."

I looked over at Kate, who at once took the cue.

"Yes; I am sure my husband would not like it. But if you, my dear Mr. Grinrod, would kindly let him know, without our knowing anything about it—you know what a temper the captain has—that Captain White is here waiting for him, I would pay for the room and five shillings for the message, cab, and so on, and should be so much obliged to you."

The irascible, suspicious Grinrod was mollified and subdued by the power of beauty.

"I'll do anything to oblige a lady," he said, and went out to despatch the message, evidently knowing quite well where to send it.

Never did hours pass so slowly as those that elapsed, while we were waiting at the Three Pigeons for the unknown thief. The landlord came in and out, doing his best to be civil and attentive, talking about horses and handicaps, and asking for advice upon this race and that, until I was afraid he would discover my shallow, superficial knowledge, and detect me as an impostor. The people in the bar yelled, and quarrelled, and fought; sometimes Grinrod was called out to thrust half-a-dozen of the most intoxicated, those who could drink no more, into the street.

Twelve o'clock struck from the church-clock opposite, time crept slowly on, still nobody came. Another hour struck, and we began to feel that it was useless to wait longer.

Just then we heard a bell ring, and Grinrod bustled in. "He's here, at private door; shall I show 'em up?" Kate nodded. The next few moments seemed an age.

There was a whispered conference at the door; then we heard something on the stairs, thump, thump, thump, as if a heavy piece of furniture were being dragged up. Then the door opened and revealed the cunning, wizened face of Bob Hargreaves.

He had evidently come in hot haste, the perspiration streamed from his face, which he was wiping nervously with his blue cotton handkerchief. He wore the very same costume as when I first saw him, except that the cowskin waistcoat was replaced by one of dirty white cotton.

"I'm late, missus," he cried, making a kind of awkward salute. "And so the captain couldn't come; well, he'd ought to let me know."

At this moment he caught sight of me. I could withhold myself no longer, and rushed eagerly forward. His face became livid, and then green. He turned to escape, but his stick slipped from under him, he came down heavily, his head striking against the corner of the table, and lay there insensible.

It was not a time for thinking of legal niceties, and I had no scruples in turning out his pockets at once, making sure that I should find the missing notes. I soon came to a big, greasy pocket-book and opened it, but the notes were not there. A thorough search only revealed in his possession a half-crown, a few coppers, a return third-class ticket for Howbent, and a pawnbroker's duplicate for the cowskin waistcoat, pledged for half-a-crown that morning.

I was staggered at this last apparent proof of the man's impecuniosity, and certainly the position was an awkward one. Hargreaves, for the moment stunned by the fall, was fast recovering his senses. On the face of it I had been guilty of an aggravated assault and robbery. And I had not a tittle of evidence against the man.

"I think we'd better get out of this as fast as we can," I said to Kate. "Mr. Hargreaves has been too many for us," and I began cramming his things back into his pocket. "Stop," cried Kate, "Jem, I have been thinking; there is just one chance. Let us steal the pawn-ticket."

The thought that was in her mind also flashed upon me. I slipped the ticket into my pocket, Kate put her arm in mine, we marched boldly downstairs and out of doors; we were in the street before anybody had noticed us. Then we went straight to the pawnbroker's shop and redeemed the cowskin waistcoat, carrying it off to my office, where we carefully examined it.

At first sight there was nothing remarkable in the waistcoat; but Kate's attention was speedily drawn to the elaborate way in which the lining was quilted in, and the painstaking stitching about it. It was an exciting moment when, after unpicking some of the lining, she brought the corner of a piece of paper to light. It was a bank-note, and, bit by

bit, as the waistcoat was unpicked, note after note came to light till the whole amount of ten thousand pounds was made up!

You can imagine our joy as we put the missing money into Uncle Henry's hands. He was on the point of calling in an accountant to take charge of his books, and inform his creditors that he could no longer meet his engagements; but the recovered ten thousand pounds put a new aspect on affairs. My uncle's credit was saved.

We sent the cowskin waistcoat to Mr. Hargreaves at Howbent, with a polite note begging him to accept the two and sevenpence-halfpenny we had paid for its redemption, as compensation for the slight damage we had done to its lining—a damage which his skill in his craft would enable him speedily to repair. We saw nothing more of him till the end of three months, when a favourable turn of affairs enabled my uncle to repay his loan with interest. Then Bob was seized with remorse, or some feeling that answered the same purpose, and he confessed to me that he had stolen the notes that we had so fortunately recovered. The devil had tempted him, he said; for he had noticed that, when I locked up the safe, I made use of a key I took from a nail over the fireplace, and that I returned it to the same place. The temptation to clear ten thousand pounds at a blow was irresistible. He watched me out of the office, and had no difficulty in shooting back the lock of my door with his clasp knife. There was no risk; for, had he been found in my room, he would have had a plausible excuse ready. Then he found the key of the safe hanging where I had left it, and was soon in possession of the money he had so recently parted with. He took my portfolio, too, for he had seen me put the list of notes there. He would have gone to London next day and cashed them, had he not heard from me that I had a copy of the list of numbers—may I be forgiven for the falsehood I told on the occasion!—but, assuming that the notes would be stopped, he wrote to Captain White, who, from his frequent visits to the Continent and his habit of dealing with large sums of money, was a convenient agent for the purpose. I fancy that Bob had had similar dealings with him before of a like nature, although he solemnly affirmed that he had not. As Robert said, he was no scholar, and had

not noticed, in using one of my envelopes—for the sake of economy—that there was any but an ordinary device on the seal. If he had he would have thought nothing of it; and he was still in wonder as to the way in which we found out his appointment with White. He had sewn the notes up in his cowskin waistcoat the day after he stole them; in fact, that was his occupation on the morning of my visit. And he secured a place of safe deposit for his money by pawning the waistcoat on his way to meet Captain White.

After all, Uncle Henry made a lot of money through being obliged to hold on to his cotton; for it rose suddenly a half-penny a pound, on receipt of disastrous news of the new crop. He behaved very handsomely to Kate on the occasion of our wedding the other day. I often shiver when I think of how nearly I had shipwrecked all our prospects for life by a moment's carelessness; and, under Providence and next to my wife Kate, I have nobody to thank so much for getting me out of the scrape as Her Majesty's Postmaster-General, who sent me that unopened dead letter.

WARFARE AFLOAT.

THE war-canoes and periagnas of the savages with whom Dampier, Cook, and La Pérouse came in contact, were scarcely more unlike a modern ship than was the style of craft to which our ancestors applied the name. The fleets with which Harold Hardrada and Norman William crossed to England, the six hundred sail with which Edward the Third swept the narrow seas, were but collections of white or red sailed fishing smacks and coasters. A navy, in the proper sense of the word, could not exist, when no sovereign had the wherewithal to build and maintain a class of vessels exclusively for fighting purposes. Ships were pressed, as men were pressed, in war time, and as many soldiers as they could carry were put aboard them, the crew being expected to work the vessel, as in time of peace.

Twenty years ago, in the mud of a little river on the French coast, there was discovered, in excellent preservation, a vessel really constructed for war—or at least for piracy—that of some old Danish rover of the tenth or eleventh century. It was very long, as the viking of the north loved

his "seasnake" to be, and very low, with but a half deck, and sturdy masts. But the breadth of beam was reasonable enough, and the solidity of build wonderful, the vessel being a perfect bed of timbers, tough, sound, well calked and well riveted. A flotilla of such Norse ships, urged along by oar and sail, could in any but the worst weather grope its way to wherever plunder allured it.

The classical galley was at first small enough. When Egypt was queen of the seas, when Phœnicia sent her barks from isle to isle, and even when Persia fought at sea with Greece for the sway of the Levant, vessels of very moderate tonnage sufficed for every purpose of war and commerce. The real growth of naval architecture began with the long and sharp struggle between Rome and Carthage. The haughty Punic Republic, never so dangerous as at sea, pressed even Rome so hard, that to be left behind in the race of shipbuilding was to be worsted in the game.

The galley, from having a single bank of oars, came to show a formidable array, usually of three banks, often of five, and in the case of some exceptional monsters, such as the Egyptian admiral galley or flagship, even of nine. The fleet with which Pompey sailed to exterminate the Cilician pirates was such as never had been dreamed of at the time of the Punic embassy of Regulus; and such a naval encounter as that between Augustus on the one hand, and Antony and Cleopatra on the other, would have been impossible in the earlier ages of the State. The flight of the queen of Egypt, after Actium, was in itself a prodigy of speed. Her gilded ship, driven along with the full power of countless flashing oars, reached Alexandria as quickly as steam now enables us to traverse the distance.

When there was no adversary, foreign or domestic, left to fight, shipbuilding became a waning science, and three banks of oars the maximum. That was a fleet of triremes from which Pliny the Elder—Admiral Pliny—saw the huge smoke-cloud, streaked with fire, above dead and cold Vesuvius. It is by a venial error that the big galleys, the quadremes and quinquiremes, figure in Hypatia. The sternly practical Roman never laid out his sesterces, except with the prospect of certain profits and sure returns. "My lords" would themselves admit that Devastations and Alexandras were

useless in the absence of any conceivable enemy.

There was a good deal of unavoidable uncertainty, we must remember, in the navigation of the ancients, or of the seamen of the middle ages, which causes them to contrast, perforce, unfavourably with the sailors of to-day. The mariner's compass was only known, in an imperfect form, to the Chinese. There were no charts, no list of soundings, no booklore, circle sailing, quadrants and sextants, loglines, or hydrography. The poor fellows knew the stars, on fine nights, as a shepherd knows his sheep, and they had good memories for creek and headland, and treasured up every slight landmark as they coasted, keeping a bright look-out for signs of mischief. But foul weather and an overcast sky upset all their calculations, and they could but call on their gods before the empire became Christian, on their saints later, and trust that Hercules or St. Peter, Castor and Pollux or St. Januarius, would bring them safe to port.

The little vessels of the north were fairly well handled. Alfred's coastguard ships, swifter than the Danes' vessels, proved how much could be done with scanty means. But the miserable death of Henry the First's heir, on the Caskets, in fine weather, and the wreck and ruin of many a gallant crusading band, show how helpless were the great ships in the haphazard fashion of navigating then in vogue. We still preserve, in naval phraseology, some traces of the bygone state of things, when the fore-castle was a real wooden tower, and the after-castle another, full of archers—when the master sailed the ship, and the captain, with his "souldiers," fought her, and was seasick, very likely, and glad to get back to terra firma.

Henry the Eighth, in a quiet way, perhaps, the wealthiest of European princes, having his thrifty father's hoards to draw upon, and a servile parliament at his back, certainly founded the navy of England. A model of the Great Harry, of fifteen hundred tons, figures in several arsenals and museums. Then there was the thousand-ton Regent, and the Henry Grâce de Dieu, a potent four-master, with three grinning rows of guns on each broadside, and a poop and fore-castle as lofty as oak could make them. Though Elizabeth's navy was effective enough, she had fewer ships, and smaller, than the fifty that the

wifekiller bequeathed to his descendants, while Charles the First's Sovereign of the Seas, launched in 1637, with its eighty-six guns and sixteen-hundred tonnage, long appeared the ne plus ultra of shipbuilding.

Curiously enough, the Don, whose example led or forced all maritime Europe into the costly race of naval competition, performed his chief exploits with apparently insufficient means. Both Spaniard and Portuguese did really creditable work, as explorers and as conquerors, in pinks and caravels of very light tonnage. The ships of Don Henry, the squadron with which Vasco de Gama rounded the Cape of Storms and bombarded Calicut the wealthy, the cruisers that hoisted the red and yellow of Castile on the Spice Islands and the grim and desolate isles of the Antarctic, were mere cock-boats when compared with the average of our modern shipping.

It was the silver of Peru, the cochineal of Mexico, the mineral and vegetable wealth of the fair plundered continent of Southern America, that lent Spain the sinews of war. Because myriads of Indians toiled and died beneath the lash in tropical plantations, or pined in the deep mines of Bolivia, the Most Catholic King could send to sea the huge floating castles, that weighed upon the mind of England as a nightmare would have done. We hardly realise, in our present sense of security, the full meaning of that Spanish Armada which it had cost Philip the Second five years and untold treasure to prepare, which carried its twenty thousand veteran troops, with an unrivalled artillery, immense warlike stores, and two thousand young volunteers of the best blood of Spain, and which, as old MSS. prove, frightened Huguenot France as much as it did ourselves.

Very fortunately, the seamanship by which the Spaniard had won renown seemed to desert him when he put to sea in the great galleons and quadros that no other country could afford to build. We still see, in the Painted Hall at Greenwich, how Nelson boarded and took the unwieldy four-deckers, in spite of all their cannon and musketeers; and Drake, and Howard, and Frobisher had done as much two centuries before. In the naval duels of the Elizabethan epoch, light and handy ships proved an overmatch for the massive leviathans that were slow to bring their imposing broadside to bear upon a nimbler adversary.

Singularly enough, it was by a revival of classical strategy that England was, in the seventeenth century, put into extremest peril. Louis the Magnificent's galleys in Torbay were a more real danger than the fleet with which De Ruyter had burned our ships in the Medway. For, however great the alarm caused in London by the sullen roar of the Dutch guns, the Hollanders had not a single regiment to disembark, whereas the French king had sent to the Devon coast a formidable force of white-coated grenadiers, to co-operate with the expected Jacobite rising.

The galleys were an especially French, as they had been an especially Roman, institution. The force had been patronised by several kings, nor was it until the reign of Louis the Thirteenth that the general of the galleys was made subordinate to the high admiral of France. For harassing an enemy's coast, and for the transport of troops, this fair-weather flotilla was unsurpassed. But a galley of Louis the Fourteenth's time, rowed by wretches chained to the oar, the vilest felons mingled with runaway Protestants, whose sole crime was their attempt to escape to Holland or England, was the nearest approach to a floating pandemonium ever devised. To every ten convicts was allotted a Turkish or Moorish prisoner of war, whose knotted cord fell on the bare shoulders of all who flinched, while boat-swain and officers patrolled the narrow space between the row-benches, and plied rattan and lash unsparingly.

It was by sheer fear of physical suffering that the chained rowers were urged to keep the great oars rising and falling with such mechanical regularity. The galley slaves were not expected to fight: there were soldiers on board to do that. But they were expected to row, and no plea of illness or exhaustion was admitted. So far from the sick or weary being sent to an infirmary, they were deliberately beaten to death. Fainting, bleeding, the miserable wretches were to the last regarded as so much mechanism, to be stimulated by cuts of the whip, and when they died, their bodies were unchained from bench and oar, and tossed into the sea.

Our grandfathers winked at a good deal of arbitrary interference with our boasted British liberty, for the sake of maintaining the national supremacy afloat. Those were hard years during which England,

fighting fiercely with France, Spain, Holland, and America, on blue water, and pursued by the jealous hatred of all the neutral north, single-handed kept the sea. That picturesque institution, the press-gang, struck a chill to the hearts of midnight roysterers, not on the coast alone, but far inland. It was not lawful to press burgess, freeman, or potwalloper, of the rotten boroughs of those days. Apprentices were exempt, and so were the mates and masters of merchantmen. But the herd of undistinguished Englishmen, who went abroad after dark, ran no trifling risk of finding themselves unpleasantly transformed into man-of-war's-men.

At the time of Navarino—the “untoward event,” as, from the Treasury Bench, it was described in Parliament—the Turkish navy was a very fine one. The Sultan could not send to sea so imposing an armament as that which the Venetians, centuries since, had destroyed at Lepanto; but still France, England, and Russia had to fight sharply before the Turkish and Egyptian three-deckers of Ibrahim Pacha could be burned, sunk, or driven off. The division of duty in Sultan Mahmoud's fleet was simply managed. Greeks trimmed the sails and did what we consider the proper work of seamen, while the Turks served the guns, and stood to their cannon with the dogged valour of their stubborn race.

Armoured vessels, from many extraneous causes, have never yet been fairly tried in fight. In the American civil war, the Merrimac, roughly protected, struck a terror into the Federals afloat, which subsequent experience has not confirmed. At Liessa, the wooden flagship of the Austrian admiral, rammed, crippled, or damaged the cuirassed craft opposed to her. The great Spanish mailed ships, off Carthagena, avoided real battle, while in the Paraguay river the strange spectacle was presented of a Brazilian ironclad, boarded and taken, sword in hand, by simple Paraguayans who, when they had won the deck, could not open the plated hatches which led to hold, cabins, and engine-room, and thus abandoned the monster whose vital parts they were unable to reach.

The naval warfare of the future, if less skilfully conducted than that of the past, will at all events be enormously expensive. The line-of-battle ships of Nelson's day, with their terrible show of teeth, carried mere popguns compared to the ponderous artillery, which every year grows heavier. Naval commanders who won their laurels

at the Nile or Trafalgar, could they awaken to behold the hideous and quasi-invulnerable monsters that now burthen the deep and lighten the pockets of the taxpayer, would listen in half-incredulous wonder to a statement of the weight and range of the modern cannon. Certainly, even to fire a shotted gun across an adversary's bows is not a step to be lightly taken, when the shot weighs a ton or so of chilled steel, and the charge costs John Bull seven golden sovereigns.

Torpedoes, fish-torpedoes, and other stealthy and submarine agents of destruction, are pronounced likely to play an important part in future nautical conflicts, while in building rams we have condescended to take a lesson from the brazen-beaked triremes of Athens, Egypt, and Rome. It is probable, however, that ships, indispensable for purposes of transport, will never again be quite so important, or so relatively formidable, as they have been. Even so long ago as the siege of Sevastopol, the combined fleets of the allies suffered more damage than they inflicted, and in the duel between floating and fixed defences, the balance of power surely inclines towards the latter.

WHAT HE COST HER.

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF "LOST HER MARRIED," "AT HER MERCY,"
"HALVER," &c.

CHAPTER LIV. THE SACRIFICE.

THE excitement among the audience in the assize court the next morning was even greater than it had been upon the previous day; the vast hall was, if possible, more closely packed than before, and presented to the prisoner's eyes, as they wandered over it, an unbroken wall of faces, in which it was difficult to pick out those he knew. There was one face among them, however, which he felt had not been present yesterday, and had guessed the cause of its absence; namely, his father's. The old man had found himself unequal to behold his only son in the prisoners'-dock, even though Mr. Redburn had expressed his confidence that he would pass out of it a free man; yet now, when the odds, as Cecil thought, in common with the vast majority of those around him, had veered round, and were apparently against him, there was his father, not many feet from where he himself stood, sitting next to Mr. Everett. His face had grown grayer and graver of these late months, as well it might, but its

expression was, on the whole, less wretched than Cecil had expected; and when it turned towards himself seemed to endeavour to convey some encouragement and hope. In the self-same corner of the gallery that he had occupied before, sat the old man whose hostile looks had previously attracted Cecil's attention, and he too seemed of better cheer; but the joy that lit up his eyes, as they fixed themselves upon him, was of baleful brightness, and he felt that they triumphed in his fall.

Most of the faces that he scanned had a similar satisfaction in them, though not the same malignity. They were pleased to think that a scoundrel who had deserted one woman and deceived another was about to receive his fit reward. Others, again—and this was even a worse omen—regarded him with the pity that tender hearts feel for those in misfortune, even when deserved. In the view of the spectators in general his fate, in short, appeared to be sealed; though their excitement, strange to say, was no whit diminished from that circumstance. Nay, it extended, which it had not hitherto done, to the rows of gentlemen of the long robe who sat between him and the judge. Nods, whispers, and glances of intelligence were interchanged among them, and in time escaped from those narrow limits and flew all over the court. Something of importance had happened, said the best-informed, which would throw a new light upon the trial; but what it might be was left to the imagination.

Some said that a third wife belonging to the prisoner at the bar had been discovered, whom he had married when he was at school, and would take precedence of all the rest. Others, as accurate in fact as in law, affirmed that the second wife had suddenly died, and that the prosecution would therefore fall to the ground. Cecil himself only knew that Rumour was busy by the buzzing of her wings.

As soon as the judge took his seat, Ella was summoned into the witness-box, and her appearance was the signal for the profoundest silence. Her face was of ashen paleness; but though the features were firm and composed, it gave the impression, to a close observer, of tension. It was quiet, but from restraint rather than from inward calm. She looked neither to the right hand nor to the left, but straight before her, where the counsel for the defence was standing, about to commence her cross-examination. Instead of the searching look which that learned gentleman generally used upon such occasions,

he wore an expression of mild magnanimity.

"An incident has come to our knowledge, my lud, since yesterday," he began, "which will, I hope, release your ludship and the gentlemen of the jury from the necessity of hearing any further arguments from either side respecting the present unhappy case. Above all things I would wish to spare the present witness any pain and distress of mind (of which she has endured more than enough already) that can by possibility be avoided; so, without preface or question, I will read aloud the following statement written in the witness's own hand on the night but one previous to her marriage, and given to her (supposed) husband probably upon the following morning—the morning, that is, before that ceremony took place. My learned friend upon the other side will not, as I understand, question the authenticity or genuineness of this document, and indeed the witness herself will admit as much.

"DEAREST CECIL,—Notwithstanding the happiness with which I look forward to our union, and terrible to me as would be the loss of your dear love, I must risk your displeasure—and all its possible consequences—by a revelation of my true position. I cannot permit myself to call you mine under circumstances, however justifiable in my own mind, which may savour to yours of false pretences. The name under which I have passed for many months, and which I still dare to hope I shall exchange for yours, is not my own—it is my mother's name, but not my father's. There have been family troubles, not indeed of a disgraceful, but still of a most painful kind, which have compelled me to adopt it. My father (whom God preserve) is at enmity with me. I need not here explain the causes that have led to it, for there is nothing in them to which my husband could take exception. It has been the result of ungovernable temper upon the one side, and upon the other—on mine, no doubt of temper also; but yet, I trust, not without circumstances of mitigation. In love and reverence for my father I have not failed, though in filial obedience I have been wanting. I have not hesitated to confess to you that I am myself by nature passionate; I do not think I am impatient of control, but my nature revolts against injustice, and in this case injustice has been done to me. I acknowledge, with all my heart, that I have behaved with disrespect towards my father, the man whom, of all others (save her husband), a woman

is bound to revere and honour. I revere and honour him still, and that I deeply regret the breach between us you may gather from the strenuous efforts I have made—and, I am thankful to reflect, successfully—to heal the differences between you and your father. Still, he has cast me off, and even forbid me to wear his name; and I, on my part, have taken him at his word and assumed that of my mother. This I have sworn before Heaven to wear until I have exchanged it for that of my husband, and whatever may be the consequences to me, I shall keep my oath. The matter itself can be of no little consequence to you, but the concealment of it on my part would, I feel, be doing you a great and grievous wrong. Therefore, dearest Cecil, I have made confession of my fault, and do pray Heaven that your dear love may prove great and generous enough to overlook it and forgive, always your loving,
'ELLA.'

When the reading was finished, the judge beckoned for the document to be handed up to him, and attentively perused it.

"This is your handwriting, madam, is it?" enquired he of Ella.

"Yes, my lord."

"And it was written on the date assigned to it?"

"Yes, my lord."

Then the judge signed to Mr. Redburn to go on.

"I have, I trust, but little more to say, my lud," returned he, with that sideways bow which is one of the graces of the profession.

"You told my learned friend, madam, yesterday, that you and the prisoner at the bar did not conspire together to deceive the public with respect to the pseudonym made use of at your marriage; but you did not, I am sure, intend by that to swear that he had no knowledge of this deception before your marriage?"

"We did not conspire," answered Ella, in a low faint voice.

"Just so; of that I am quite convinced. Your nature, madam, is not one fitted for base conspiracies. But what may have seemed to be of no consequence—or certainly no harm—may, in the eye of the law, be of great weight. The question I have to ask you—and I hope it will be my last—is a different one from that put by my learned friend, and with the reply to which he was so well satisfied; but your answer to my question will be of even greater importance. It will probably decide the fate of the prisoner at the bar.

That he has wronged you deeply, I, for one, will not deny; but you are not here, madam, as your own avenger."

She bowed in silence; her hands grasped the ledge in front of the witness-box convulsively; even ordinary spectators could see that the moment was supreme with her.

"Are you prepared to swear, madam, that this confession, written out by your own hand, was not perused by the prisoner at the bar, before your marriage?"

"I am not."

A murmur of astonishment and compassion ran through the court, and in the midst of it—which immensely heightened the popular excitement—the prisoner burst into tears.

"I submit, my lord, though I cannot place my unhappy client in the witness-box to corroborate this testimony," observed Mr. Redburn, with confidence, "that, proceeding as it does, as it were, from the other side, it is conclusive; that the charge against the prisoner at the bar has failed in limine."

The judge looked enquiringly over his spectacles at Mr. Pawson, who rose immediately, omitting however to settle his gown upon his shoulders, without which, as is well known, no examination of a witness can take place.

"I have no opposition to offer, my lord, either to the statement my learned brother has elicited," said he, mechanically, "or to the deduction he has drawn from it."

And he sat down again. The excitement of the audience had risen to the highest degree compatible with silence.

"This piece of evidence has taken the court very much by surprise," observed the judge, doubtfully.

"Not more so, my lord, than it has taken me, I do assure you," added Mr. Redburn. "Had I been yesterday aware of the existence of this document—which, however, only came into my hands last night—and of course of the use to which it had been put, I should at once have informed my learned friend, and deprived us all of the great intellectual pleasure of hearing his opening speech."

Here, so closely does comedy tread upon the heels of tragedy, there was a general titter.

"If the counsel for the prosecution has nothing further to say," said the judge, knitting his brows, "it would be wasting the time of the court to prolong the matter. The case is over. Prisoner at the bar, you are discharged."

Then the pent-up excitement of the audience found a vent. The judge, as though conscious of the necessity of its doing so, had withdrawn himself, and the court-house was at once transformed into a Tower of Babel. Ella had disappeared from the witness-box, and Cecil had made use of the first moment of freedom to make his way from the court-house in the company of Mr. Welby, who had provided a closed carriage for him without, which whirled him off at once to Grantham. Amid the strife of tongues, a loud voice had angrily cried out that the case had been sold, and this of course had added to the universal hubbub. It had not escaped the ears of Mr. Pawson, shouldering his way through the crowd towards the robing-room, but had only called up into his face a contemptuous smile. Feeling his gown pulled in the throng, with evident intention, he turned round, and found himself face to face with an old gentleman, apparently a clergyman of the Church of England, but wearing a very "militant" expression indeed.

"If you are the counsel for the prosecution, sir, you have failed in your duty," whispered he, in a low, fierce voice, "and are a disgrace to your profession."

"You use very strong language, sir," returned Mr. Pawson, quietly.

"I have a right to use it; my name is Juxon, and I am Mrs. Landon's father."

"Then come with me," answered the counsel, seizing him by the arm, and carrying him along with him to the robing-room, whither Mr. Redburn had already preceded him. Beside the two queen's counsel there was fortunately no one else in that sacred place.

"Redburn, here is a gentleman with a grievance, that he has laid to my charge, and from which I must ask you to clear me. He accuses me of having done my client wrong, and you know best that that is not the case."

"But who the deuce is he?" enquired Mr. Redburn, with irritation.

"That is my card, sir—the Rev. Canon Juxon—the father of the woman whose name you have just disgraced."

"Forgive me, sir," answered Mr. Redburn, with emotion; "you have every right to speak; but you are wrong in one thing—you are the father of a lady with whose name disgrace can never be associated. I wish I had dared to say as much in court. She is the noblest and most self-denying of women."

"That is true, indeed," assented Mr.

Pawson. "It was your daughter's own hand which placed that document you heard read to-day in my learned friend's possession; and from her own lips did I myself receive express instructions not to question its genuineness."

Mr. Juxon fell, rather than sank, into a chair, and covered his face with his hands; both the learned counsel were silent for some moments—specially retained by common humanity—then one, Mr. Pawson, began to plead for it.

"If you will permit me, sir, I will take you to your daughter, from whom, as she bitterly feels—though it is through her own fault—you have been too long estranged. Just now, of all times, a reconciliation with you would be a balm to her indeed."

"You advise well, sir," returned the old gentleman, rising quickly to his feet, but speaking with some dignity. "Take me to her—take me to her."

So soon as the judge had pronounced those fateful words, "The prisoner is discharged," Ella had left the court-house and returned with Gracie to her inn. It was only a few steps down the street, but her companion felt with what difficulty she traversed them, and how nearly exhausted nature had succumbed under its load. Yet it was only physical strength that was wanting to her. She kept her spirit up and her high bearing, till the door had closed between them and the outer world, and she was alone with her friend. Then she threw herself upon her bosom, and burst into tears.

"Do not weep, my darling," said Gracie, gravely, "it is not for you to weep, for you have triumphed, Heaven knows it, though man may award the victory to another."

"And he will, Gracie. The finger of scorn will henceforth be pointed at me wherever I go. Do you know who it is that you fold in your arms—a woman without a name and shameful?"

"Yes; I know her well," was the low, soft response, "and never knew her more worthy of respect and love than I know her now. If life seems emptied of its joys to you, it cannot be so, long—your reward will come, Ella."

"My reward? joy for me? No, Gracie. The hardness of my lot is that I am yet so young. I am under the same curse with him of old, who said, 'Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness'—and it will endure. Nay, my case is worse, for my very father—"

There was a knock at the door, and Mr. Pawson entered.

"I am afraid, sir," said Gracie, coming hastily forward, "that Mrs. Landon is not just now in a condition to see visitors."

"Nay, I am well enough, though I am no longer Mrs. Landon," interposed Ella, firmly, her vigour at once returning to her with the occasion. "I am under too many obligations to Mr. Pawson to deny myself to him if he wishes to speak with me."

"I am come on no idle errand, dear madam, believe me," said the lawyer, gravely; "and for my excuse I have brought with me a visitor who will, I am sure, be welcome."

He pointed to the door, where stood Mr. Juxon, with eager eyes and trembling limbs.

"Father!" cried Ella, and rushed into his outstretched arms.

"Yes, yes, my darling; if you have lost a husband, you have regained a father," sobbed the old man. "I was hard and harsh to you, but that is all over now. It will never be so again."

"I was so disobedient and bitter," she murmured. Her tone was penitent but very gentle. Her head was lying on his breast as though it had found a place of rest at last. Gracie and Mr. Pawson had at once withdrawn, and father and daughter were alone together.

"We have been estranged," she went on, "but never alienated. I have never ceased to love you."

"I know it; I have heard it proved, darling"—he was referring to the document read in court—"it will never more be questioned." He led her to the sofa and sat down; in their new-found happiness they were for the moment oblivious of the present, and unmindful of external things. They did not hear the rapid step upon the stair, nor the quick knock at the door without. "And Gerard, your Uncle Gerard, has stood by you?"

"Oh yes, father; he has done his very best."

"God bless him for it. I was wrong about that money: he shall have it."

"I am not sure," said a rough, sharp voice. The colonel himself was face to face with the brother he had not seen for many a year. "The law was against me, I confess."

"The law is against *her*, Gerard," said the old man significantly, caressing his daughter with one hand, while he held out the other to his brother.

"That is true, John," said the colonel,

taking it, "and her case is worse than mine was."

"No doubt," assented the canon, smiling, "though that is not quite the deduction I meant to draw. However, if you will have it so, so be it; forgive me, then, dear Gerard, as Ella has forgiven the wretch who wronged her."

"I will break every bone in his skin if she will only give me leave," answered the colonel. "I passed my word at the first start to submit myself to her and the lawyer, or you may depend upon it she should have been avenged long since. Now we have tried the law and failed, it is high time to appeal to a higher tribunal;" and the colonel pointed to a brand-new horsewhip, which he had laid down beside his hat.

"Uncle Gerard, you pain me by such talk," said Ella, "and I have had enough of pain." Then, seeing how deeply the colonel was moved by those sad words, she beckoned him to her side: "If my calamity were a little less," continued she, "I would almost have welcomed it, since it has made you and my dear father one again."

"I have behaved devilish badly, John, I own," said the colonel.

"And I have behaved worse, Gerard, because, being a minister of Heaven, I ought to have behaved much better."

Ella slipped from between them, and vanished from the room. It was not fitting for her to be a witness to such confessions of weakness from such mouths. It was, however, as it happened, an unnecessary precaution, for the conversation at once took another turn.

"Upon my life, John, this damned scoundrel must be horsewhipped," said the colonel. "I have passed my word to Ella, but you are still unpledged, and, I am happy to see, look strong and hearty."

"I should like to do it of all things, my dear Gerard, but the fact is they have just made me a canon, and I am afraid it wouldn't do."

"Why the deuce did they do that?" said the colonel, with irritation.

"I don't know, I'm sure," returned the other, natively; "it puzzled me as much as it does you—— It's a good whip!" he sighed.

"Yes, and between ourselves, it has not been bought altogether to no purpose. As I left the court-house, I found a young

gentleman upon the steps, whose face was not altogether unknown to me—though his dearest friends would fail to recognise it by this time. His name, I believe, is Whymper-Hobson. He was explaining to an acquaintance the injurious effect that this acquittal would have upon poor Ella's social position, and seemed to derive great satisfaction from it and his own malice, until I caught him by the collar."

"And you gave him a good thrashing, did you?" enquired the canon, with excitement.

"My dear John, I thrashed him within that of his life;" and the colonel marked out upon his little finger about an eighth of an inch in length.

"Thank you, Gerard, thank you—though I am afraid some trouble will come of that. You may depend upon it a fellow of that kind will consult his lawyer."

"He'll consult his doctor first, however, I'll take my oath.—Hush! Here comes Ella. Let us get her off to town at once."

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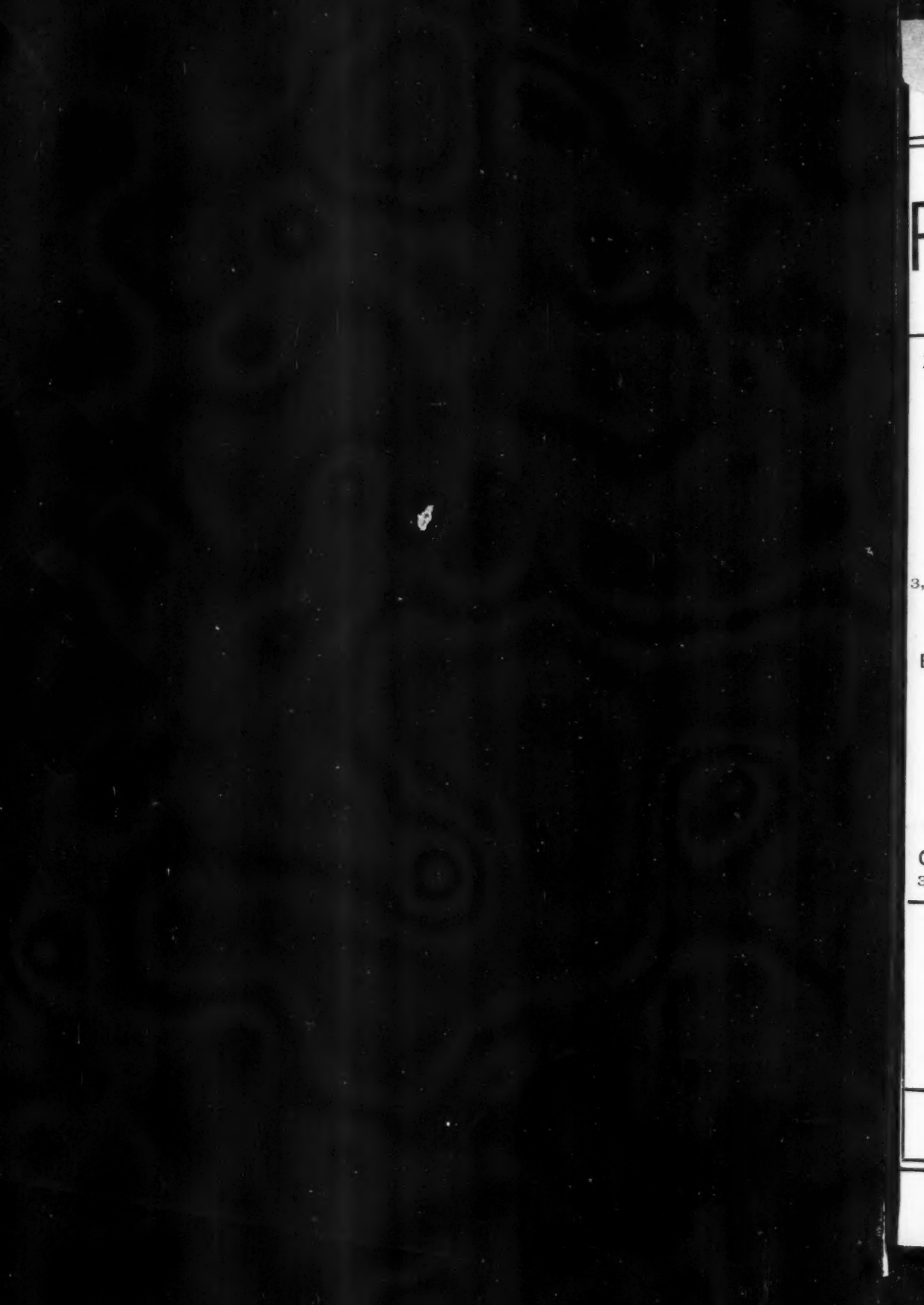
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